



Hostas Have You Singing the Blues

Hostas are a mainstay in shade gardens. They are easy to grow, drought tolerant once established, and multiply rapidly so you'll have additional plants for your own garden or to share with friends.

They are available in a wide range of foliage colors ó green, gold, blue, white and countless combinations of these. The texture of hosta leaves vary from smooth to puckered.

Blue hostas are fascinating types. Imposters all, their leaves are really green! A waxy coating, called cutin, is responsible for the blue color we see ó the thicker the coating; the bluer the hosta. This waxy coating is worn away by rainfall or overhead watering, sunlight and heat. You can even rub it off.

You can keep your hostas in the blue as long as possible by controlling some environmental and cultural factors. Plant them in a spot out of direct sunlight and provide supplemental watering with soaker hoses or aim your hose at the base of the plant.

Hostas with a thicker coating of cutin maintain their color longer than others. Choose these, give them the best cultural conditions, and your hostas will be singing the blues all summer long. Here are some of the best of the blues.

Blue Mouse Ears

Starting with the smallest, Blue Mouse Ears is a cutie. Only growing 6 to 8 inches tall, it forms tiny mounds of silvery blue leathery leaves. Lavender flowers burst from swollen buds in mid-summer. Blue Mouse Ears was named 2008 Hosta of the Year.

Plant this charmer in a trough with other miniature hostas or in a shady rock garden. It is also an ideal choice for a fairy garden.

Hadspen Blue

Growing in tidy clumps of heart-shaped, thick, powdery blue-gray foliage, Hadspen Blue is a small hosta perfect for edging the paths in a shade garden or positioning at the front of a hosta grouping. Introduced in 1976, it is tried and true.

Lavender touched, white flowers appear on 18 inch stems in mid- summer. Partner this hosta with Japanese painted ferns.

Prairie Sky

Powdery blue, cupped and puckered leaves with thick substance grow in dense mounds up to 14 inches tall. Light purple flowers emerge on tall stems in mid-July.

Distinctive and delightful, plant Prairie Sky beside a chartreuse-foliaged perennial like Hakenachloa macra -All Gold- the combination is stunning.

Winfield Blue

Named for Winfield, Illinois where it was discovered, Winfield Blue grows slowly to form a medium-sized mound of wavy, lance-shaped blue leaves. Pale lavender flowers emerge in mid-July.

Plant Winfield Blue with Dicentra -Luxuriant- The pink flowers and fine-textured foliage of the ever blooming bleeding heart contrast beautifully with the hosta's bold, blue foliage.

Halcyon

One of my favorite hostas of any color, Halcyon belongs in every shade garden. It boasts heart-shaped, true blue leaves in mid-sized clumps growing 12 to 18 inches tall. I love the denseness of the foliage keeping weeds from invading.

Halcyon received the American Hosta Society's Distinguished Merit Hosta award in 1987.

Queen of the Seas

Quickly becoming a new must-have plant, Queen of the Seas grows into a 24-inch tall mound of thick, heavily ripped and corrugated, powder blue leaves. It won the Best in Show award at the 1997 National Hosta Convention.

In mid-summer, white flowers rise above the foliage. A spectacular hosta when mature, plant Queen of the Seas where it can serve as a specimen plant - where two paths meet perhaps.



Abiqua Drinking Gourd

This hosta is easy to identify by its deeply cupped, seer-suckered and unruly, deep blue foliage. It slowly grows to 24 inches tall and almost twice as wide. Nice white flowers appear in July just above the foliage. Abiqua Drinking Gourd was selected as the Hosta of the Year this year.

Plant smaller variegated hostas like June and Platinum Tiara and enjoy a terrific hosta trifecta.

Powder Blue

I guess it's pretty easy to guess the color of the leaves of this hosta - it definitely lives up to its name. Large and thick, intensely corrugated foliage grows into an impressive 28-inch mound. Lavender flowers begin blooming in early summer on tall stems.

Jack Frost brunnera is an ideal companion for Powder Blue hosta. The heart-shaped silver-frosted leaves of the brunnera and the intense powder blue foliage of the hosta play very nicely together.

Elegans

A shade garden classic, Elegans has very large, corrugated, slightly cupped, deep smoky blue leaves that grow into large 4-foot wide mounds up to 30 inches tall. Its foliage is dense enough to shade out most garden weeds. Near white flowers bloom in mid-summer.

Place Elegans toward the back of a shade garden where it will contribute lots of color and texture. Partner it with other tall shade perennials like meadow rue or bugbane.



Blue Angel

Another classic and one of the largest blue hostas, Blue Angel becomes an elegant mound of up to 36 inches tall of immense and thick, undulating and slightly textured, blue leaves. Pale lavender flowers rise above the foliage on 48 inch stems.

Blue Angel can take the place of a shrub in a shade border. Plant it near an Annabelle hydrangea and some large ferns.



Diana Stoll is a horticulturist and the garden center manager at The Planter's Palette, 28W571 Roosevelt Rd., Winfield, IL 60190. Call 630-293-1040 ext. 2 or visit their website at www.planterpalette.com.